

Oregon Department of Agriculture's Water Quality Program

Strategic Implementation Initiative Overview

(Draft: March 26, 2015)

General Background:

Since 2003, Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) Water Quality Management Program's compliance activities have primarily been initiated via response to complaints.

In 2012, the Board of Agriculture recommended that ODA identify and develop "alternatives to a complaint-based agricultural water quality program." As a result, the Ag Water Quality Program initiated two *Strategic Implementation Areas* (SIAs) in 2014 to test the use of systematic, program-initiated compliance across small watersheds.

SIA Implementation

After selection, the following steps are completed in an SIA:

- Planning and coordination meetings—ODA, the SWCD, and other key partners meet to discuss expectations and involvement.
- Compliance pre-evaluation—Using remote evaluation and field verification, each parcel is evaluated for potential surface or groundwater concerns. Landscape conditions with the potential to impact water quality that are evaluated include riparian vegetation, bare ground, and manure piles. Each parcel with the potential to impact surface or ground water is identified with one of the following concern levels:
 - None = no water quality concerns related to agricultural activities were observed,
 - Low = minimal potential for agricultural activities to impact surface or groundwater OR vegetation along streams is inadequate, but unable to determine if agricultural activities are limiting vegetation,
 - Moderate = likely potential for agricultural activities to impair surface or ground water OR agricultural activities may be preventing adequate vegetation along streams,
 - Significant = Field-verified likely potential for agricultural activities to impair surface or ground water OR agricultural activities may be preventing adequate vegetation along streams,
 - Serious = Field-verified pollution of surface or ground water or removal of vegetation along streams.
- Outreach and compliance site visits—Compliance site visits will be conducted where needed after a series of landowner notifications (targeted outreach) and opportunities for landowners to voluntarily address water quality issues.
- Compliance post-evaluation—the concern level associated with parcels that ODA, SWCD, or other partner works with to address water quality concerns will be re-assessed.

Initial SIAs: Noyer and Mill Creek Watersheds

The SIA process was initiated in the Noyer and Mill Creek Watersheds in the fall of 2013 and all steps of the process described above have been completed or are in progress. Below are the results of the pre and post compliance evaluations for the two 'test SIAs' areas.

Noyer Creek (Clackamas County) Strategic Implementation Area Results

Total Parcels in Assessment Area = 623
- 368 (N/A) (Fed. Land, Not Ag, etc.)
237 "Evaluated"

<i>Evaluation Categories</i>	<i>Pre-evaluation</i>	<i>Post-evaluation</i>
No Concern	= 200 Parcels	209 Parcels
Low Concern	= 19 Parcels	26 Parcels
Moderate Concern	= 16 Parcels	0 Parcels
Significant Concern	= 2 Parcels	2 Parcels
Serious Concern	= 0 Parcels	0 Parcels
Total	= 237 Parcels	237 Parcels

Mill Creek (Wasco County) Strategic Implementation Area Results

Total Parcels in Assessment Area = 2,032
- 1,717 (N/A) (Fed. Land, Not Ag, etc.)
315 "Evaluated"

<i>Evaluation Categories</i>	<i>Pre-evaluation</i>	<i>Post-evaluation</i>
No Concern	= 291 Parcels	302 Parcels
Low Concern	= 14 Parcels	13 Parcels
Moderate Concern	= 6 Parcels	0 Parcels
Significant Concern	= 3 Parcels	0 Parcels
Serious Concern	= 1 Parcel	0 Parcels
Total	= 315 Parcels	315 Parcels

6th Field Hydrologic Unit Code Prioritization Process:

In December 2014, the Board of Agriculture recommended "that ODA, in concert with other natural resource agencies, prioritize watersheds and develop an accelerated schedule for full-scale statewide implementation of ODA's systematic approach." The Ag Water Quality Program developed a process to prioritize watersheds at the 6th field hydrologic unit code (HUC) level statewide on agricultural lands. This prioritization process allows the Ag Water Quality Program to identify priorities for all applicable HUCs for future SIA implementation.

For each 6th field HUC with surface water and agricultural land, scores for temperature, bacteria, nutrients, sediment, and aquatic species of concern (salmonid species and other non-salmonid species that are endemic to Oregon) are calculated. The scores are combined for comparison across watersheds. ODA has identified the top 20% of the scores (geographically stratified) as high priority for selection of future SIAs.

Final Selection of SIAs for 2015-2017 Biennium:

ODA will use the prioritization scoring and other considerations to select SIAs for the 2015-2017 Biennium. Once the final selection is made, ODA will communicate the results with stakeholders and partners. ODA will also coordinate with Soil and Water Conservation Districts, watershed councils, and other local partners prior to implementation within each SIA. ODA plans to complete 6 to 12 new SIAs in the 2015-2017 biennium.